



### Hornby Casts Inactivity off the Island

December 2007

A small island community separated from recreation facilities by two ferry rides is making use of its trail networks to get active year-round.

Lying off the east coast of Vancouver Island, Hornby Island sees an influx of visitors in the summer who are already physically active. So its Active Community initiative (Active Hornby, led by the Hornby and Denman Community Health Care Society) is targeting the year-round locals.

*“I’d say the program so far has been a very big success,”* said Bonita Wexler, Active Hornby Coordinator. *“It’s seeing people more aware and more active. For the whole 20% more active by 2010...I think it’s having a tremendous impact on the community.”*

Active Hornby received a \$2,150 grant in 2006 from the BC Recreation and Parks Association through Active Communities towards community brainstorming sessions and a mobilization project. An Active Communities network formed through the community sessions, where new partnerships emerged among various sectors. The sessions explored ways for Hornby Islanders to improve their health through physical activity, healthy diets and healthy lifestyles.

*“That was great that so many people came out and were interested,”* Wexler said.



The brainstorming sessions highlighted the need to raise awareness about the existing trails and to get people out using them. In 2007, Hornby and Denman received a second Active Communities grant (\$5,000) towards auditing and improving the island trails, bikeways and pathways.

*“What we’re focusing on first is finding out what trails are more accessible to people,”* Wexler said. *“We’ve been working on getting people more familiarized with the trails and pathways, getting people out on them. Then we’ll move to the next stage of seeing if we need to do anything more to the actual trails.”*

Active Hornby is raising awareness of the trails through monthly events. These events such as the seniors’ walk, family group bike ride and Halloween walk reach different target groups.

*“We get an average of about 15 people coming out to an event, which is very good for Hornby,”* Wexler said. *“For a lot of [the participants] it’s the first time that they’ve been on the trails.”*

A few women who regularly go trail running have been helping out with the events and inspiring people to run.

Through the mobilization project, Active Hornby created a fitness calendar, posters and newsletters, along with monthly reports in the local paper. These promotions get the word out about the various existing recreation opportunities, community events, and the benefits of activity.

*“Everybody was really surprised to see how many different activities are going on,”* Wexler said.

She plans to send out a questionnaire through the newsletter which will include a list of the trails and their distances and questions for people indicating their awareness level of each trail. But already, she’s noticed a buzz starting in the community about the trail networks.

*“The awareness has piqued immensely,”* she observed.

Hornby and Denman islands were awarded pedometers from the ActNow BC Activity Challenge’s pedometer grants program in the fall of 2007. People who showed up for Hornby’s walk events were given a pedometer.

*“The pedometers have been a big motivating factor and all our trails and walkways are getting a lot more use these days,”* Wexler noted.



Although the program is targeting everybody, the islands’ large senior population (more than half the population is over the age of 50) has particularly voiced its enthusiasm.

*“They’ve really been excited about the whole pedometer project and wanting to know how much they’re actually walking,”* Wexler said. *“They stop me all the time in the community and say ‘I’m wearing my pedometer today.’”* Now a group of seniors have started getting together for weekly walks.

The walking bug has also spread to students. A ribbon-cutting ceremony and walk launched the new 500-metre track at the Hornby Community School in May 2007, tying in with Move for Health Day. The event also introduced the community to Active Hornby’s activity cards for walkers to track their mileage on a trek to any destination in North America. Wexler gave pedometers to grades 5, 6 and 7 students.

*“They were very excited about that; they thought they were great,”* she said.

Active Hornby is connecting regionally with Active Comox Valley by sharing resources and information updates.

Winter weather on Hornby brings heavy rains and falling trees, creating a challenge for walkers to access the trails. Community volunteers have come forward to build bridges and wooden pathways over flooded trails.

*“It’s been a partnership with the community,”* Wexler said.

Next, Active Hornby plans to get the word out about new trail maps that the local bike shop produced. And eventually, Wexler hopes to see better signage directing people who use the trails.



### Active Hornby Highlights

- Hornby and Denman Community Health Care Society took the 20% by 2010 physical activity challenge in 2006
- Created an Active Hornby calendar with fitness listings
- Opened a new track/trail at the community school in spring 2007
- Launched activity cards to track individual activity
- Hosting monthly active events
- Formed a committee of island health stakeholders
- Hosted community brainstorming sessions to guide the initiative
- Connecting regionally with Active Comox Valley
- Received 2 grants from BCRPA Active Communities (\$2,150 and \$5,000)
- Granted pedometers from the ActNow BC Activity Challenge in 2007

### Hornby Island Info

**Population:** approximately 1,074 ([www.islandstrust.bc.ca](http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca))

- Sports offered at the community school gym, soccer fields, baseball diamond, tennis courts
- Aerobics, dance and yoga classes offered at the community hall and New Horizons Centre
- Network of walking, hiking and biking trails
- Swimming and kayaking are popular outdoor activities